La Jolla Woman's Club
715 Silverado Street
La Jolla
San Diego County
California

HABS No. CA-1957



PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY CA-1957

LA JOLLA WOMAN'S CLUB

Location: 715 Silverado Street, La Jolla, San Diego County, California.

USGS La Jolla Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 11.474120.3633840.

Present Owner and Occupant: La Jolla Woman's Club (1971).

Present Use: A women's club house and adult center.

Significance: The La Jolla Woman's Club is one of architect Irving Gill's most noted buildings. Its simplified forms, reflecting the influence of California mission architecture, and use of reinforced concrete are trademarks of Gill's style. The building and grounds were donated to the La Jolla Woman's Club by Ellen Browning Scripps.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The cornerstone was laid on December 2, 1913; the building was completed and dedicated on October 3, 1914.

2. Architect: The architect was Irving John Gill of San Diego.

3. Original and subsequent owners:

Built on Block 32, Lots 1-6, La Jolla Park, City of San Diego, California.

Chain of Title, Grantor, Ellen Browning Scripps, Grantee La Jolla Woman's Club on October 5, 1914. Book 675 page 68. Date of filing February 14, 1915. File Number 2315.

The lots were purchased by Ellen Browning Scripps. She donated the land and buildings to the La Jolla Woman's Club with the stipulation that it remain a women's club and that every citizen of the town should benefit from the buildings.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Irving J. Gill rendered the architectural drawings and his San Diego office directed the construction. A day labor plan was used. The Aiken Tilted concrete method was employed for the walls. Metal door frames and windows (designed by Gill) and plaster beads were utilized in the construction.

5. Alterations and additions: The present condition of the building is good. With the exception of the conversion of an open court on the east elevation into a garage, few alterations have been made to the building.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

1. The La Jolla Woman's Club: The La Jolla Woman's Club was founded in 1894, and joined the State and National Federations in 1903. In 1914, a club building and lands were donated to the club by Ellen Browning Scripps, an early president of the Club. The original use for the club building was expressed by the 1914 president, Dr. Mary B. Ritter in her acceptance speech (October 3, 1914) upon the transferal of the building from Ellen Browning Scripps to the La Jolla Woman's Club.

> "--What is our part? To make this building stand for what she [Ellen Browning Scripps] intends it, progress toward higher citizenship, spreading the gospel and the fact of fraternity, of mutual helpfulness. It is the desire of the donor that every citizen of the town should in some way be benefitted by this building; that it should be a civic center in a sense, a place where we older citizens can meet for mutual benefit as the playground with its buildings will be a civic center for the younger citizens."

Early records show that a woman living in La Jolla could become a member by simply filling out a membership application. It has been said that Miss Scripps frequently paid the dues for women who hesitated to join because of the cost.

The cornerstone of the building was laid December 2, 1913. In the cornerstone was placed a history of the club, names of the members, Memorial Resolutions to the donor, a prophesy of La Jolla's future written by Miss Scripps in 1902, and a photograph of Miss Scripps.

The land and completed building formed a gift from Miss Scripps to the La Jolla Woman's Club. This gift included a codicil in the deed that if the intended purpose or use of the building was violated, or conditions of the grounds were not maintained, the grounds and building would revert to her heirs.

2. Ellen Browning Scripps: Ellen Browning Scripps was born in London on October 18, 1836. Her father emigrated with his six children to Rushville, Illinois in 1844.

After graduating from high school, Miss Scripps saved her money so she could attend Knox College from which she graduated in 1859. She resumed teaching until 1866 when she joined her oldest brother, James, on The Detroit Tribune. In 1868 she moved to Rushville to care for her father until his death in 1873. She then rejoined James, who was establishing The Detroit News, and later went on with her brother E.W., to the Cleveland Penny Press. At that time she wrote "Miss Ellen's Miscellany" which was the beginning of a modern newspaper feature.

In 1890 she and E.W. bought a ranch at Miramar, California, where she resided for seven years until she built her first home, "South Moulton Villa," in La Jolla.

She lived simply and frugally, devoting her growing income to personal and public benefactions. She contributed to schools, colleges, hospitals, playgrounds, welfare organizations, zoos, museums, and research institutions. Some of her major benefactions were to Scripps College for Women, Scripps Institute of Oceanography, and Scripps Metabolic Clinic. She commissioned the architect, Irving Gill, to design several buildings, including ber home (now the La Jolla Art Center), the Scripps Buildings at the Scripps Institute of Oceanography, and tbe La Jolla Woman's Center. She died in La Jolla on August 3, 1932. The Ellen Browning Scripps Foundation endowed from her legacy to her nephew, Robert Paine Scripps, continues her philanthropies.

3. Irving John Gill: Irving John Gill was born in Syracuse, New York in 1870. The son of a building contractor, his formal schooling extended only through high school. His early architectural training was through the family business and from a short term in a local architectural office. In 1890 he moved to Chicago and joined the architectural firm of Adler and Sullivan (one of his fellow draftsmen was Frank Lloyd Wright). Gill's major assignment during his two year stay with Adler and Sullivan was the Transportation Building for the Columbian Exposition. In 1892 Gill went to California for a vacation and decided to stay.

In 1893 Gill formed a partnership with W.S. Hebbard, producing such large half-timbered houses as the George W. Marston House (HABS No. CA-1960). Gill's partnership with Hebbard ended in 1906, and may formally mark the beginning of his transitional period. In 1907 he formed a brief partnership, lasting only a year, with Frank Mead. The buildings of this period, an example being the Melville Klauber House (HABS No. CA-1962), look forward to his mature style in their increasing simplification of forms. With the design of the Holly Sefton Memorial Hospital for Children, and the Scripps Building at the Scripps Institute of Oceanography, in 1908-09, Gill moved into his mature period. Both these buildings were constructed of concete, a material that became Gill's favored building medium. He was fascinated by the Aiken Tilted concrete method of construction and, in 1912, bought the necessary equipment for construction from the United States Government. His first use of the equipment was in the Banning House (1912, Los Angeles), and then in the La Jolla Woman's Club (1913, La Jolla). He tried to start a company, the Concrete Buildings and Investment Company, to develop and popularize this method, but the venture was not financially successful. Gill's mature work is summarized by the Dodge House (HABS No. CA-355, 1914-16, Los Angeles), and the Scripps House (1916, La Jolla). Unfortunately, the Dodge House was demolished in 1970, and the Scripps House remodeled beyond recognition. Gill himself provided the best summary of his building aesthetics:

> "There is something very restful and satisfying to my mind in the simple cube house with creamy walls, sheer and plain, rising boldly into the sky,

unrelieved by cornices or overhang of roof...I like the bare honesty of these houses, the childlike frankness and chaste simplicity of them (The Craftsman, May 1916, pages 147-148)."

When he first moved to San Diego, Gill was an extremely popular architect. His nephew, Louis J. Gill (with whom he formed a partnership in 1914), reported that his office was fairly large, employing six draftsmen, one outside supervisor and a secretary (McCoy, Gill p.20). However, after 1915, his popularity began to wane, and in 1916 he closed his San Diego office and moved to Los Angeles. He produced few buildings in the twenties, and by his death in 1936, he was largely forgotten.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished:

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2. Secondary and published:

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McCoy, Esther. Five California Architects. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1960.

McCoy, Esther. Irving John Gill, 1870-1936. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum in collaboration with the Art Center of La Jolla, 1958.

Prepared by Alberta E. Outcalt
Historian
Historic American
Buildings Survey
June, 1971

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character:

The La Jolla Woman's Club, designed by Irving John Gill in 1913, reveals the purity of architectural expression at Gill's mature stage. Gill exploited the Aiken Tilted Concrete system of construction by presenting pure rectangular forms punctured by simple arched openings, and placing metal frames for doors and windows in the forms prior to pouring the concrete. The building form is effectively extended through the use of pergola structures. Vines and other vegetation in the planned gardens provide an articulation which pleasantly contrasts with the simplicity of the building itself.

2. Condition of fabric: The building is in excellent condition and is well maintained.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The building is one story with a clerestory in the auditorium. It is essentially a rectangle, 93' (seven-bay front) x 150', with two wings extending to the north and south at the rear. The total plan is that of a T. Pergola structures on the north and south sides return the plan to a rectangle.

2. Foundations: Poured concrete.

3. Wall construction, finish, and color: The Aiken Tilted concrete method of construction was used. (Gill had purchased the necessary equipment from the United States Government the previous year and had experimented with tilt-up construction on the Banning House in Los Angeles). Metal window and door frames were set in the form before pouring the concrete. The forms were laid on a platform tilted at 15 degrees, reinforcement was laid and the concrete was poured. After the concrete had set, a top coating of fine cement covered the surface. The wall thickness is 13" to 13-3/4"; the color is white.

4. Structural system, framing: The walls are of tilt-up concrete with the wooden framing members of the roof bearing upon them. The 2" x 4" framing of the roof (over the assembly hall) is supported on four king rod trusses (spanning north to south) built of 6" x 8" timbers. The 3" x 4" rafter ends, exposed at the eaves, are nailed to the 2" x 4" roof framing and extend only a few feet within the wall. The original lath and plaster ceiling of the assembly hall was hung from 2" x 6" joists, 16" on center.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The building has a U-shaped, arcaded porch across the west elevation. It is contained within the perimeter of the tilt-slab walls. The porch continues back about 40' on the south side and 18' on the north.

   A pergola structure extends west from the face of the northeast wing to a line approximately even with the west facade and continues south to link with the building. A matching pergola extends from the south side of the building at the west front to the southern property lines. Pergolas are composed of paired concrete and stucco columns and stand about 9' high. Triple columns are located at the northwest corner where the pergolas change direction. The paired columns stand on a plinth and have a square abacus, but no capital. 8-1/2" x 9" redwood timbers span the column pairs, with 4" x 6" redwood beams running horizontally across. The smaller beams rest on top of the timbers without being fixed to them.

6. Stairways: There are five stairways to the main portion of the building. Each stairway has five risers and four

treads. All exterior stairways are painted red-brown. These poured concrete steps are flanked by concrete projections that extend out from the porch. The stairs are located on the west (front) elevation, and on the north and south elevations at the second and fifth arch from the west. Stairs into the north wing are located on the west face of the projection. They have four risers and three treads. Stairs to the concrete slab on the west side of the south wing are composed of three risers and two treads.

7. Chimneys: The building has five chimneys. The two most prominent ones are located on the west side of the elevated portion of the roof. They penetrate through the roof and rise about 13' above the main building roof (and about 8' above the eaves of the elevated portion). They are 12' off axis in either direction (north and south). Early photographs show these chimneys to be of brick covered with stucco.

   There is a chimney on the north side of the building about 16' from the east (rear) corner. A chimney of similar character is on the south side at the same location. The fifth chimney is situated on the east wall about 20' from the north end.

8. Openings:

   a. Arches: The most prominent openings are the arched forms of the porch which were cast into the tilt-slab wall. There are seven openings along the west elevation, the center being on the main entry point. The flanking arches measure 7'7" x 8'1". The entry arch is 9'3" high due to the fact that a sill is not used. Along the north and south side there are six arches, which correspond in height to those on the west. All arches on the south and west sides are open; along the north side the first is enclosed with a stucco panel and the remainder have frame and glass panels (see windows).

   b. Doorways and doors: The main entrance door is situated on axis and reflects the arched openings of the porch. Within the arched frame is a double door, each leaf being half an arch. The panels are of glass and the wood is natural teak. Glazed side

lights surround the door and again reflect the arch motif. There is wrought ironwork around the perimeter of the glass panels of the door, and over the bottom sidelights.

The other doors into the main portion of the building are of singular design, with one exception, and are employed singly or in pairs. The glazed doors are composed of 2 over 5 lights. The glass panel is placed on hinges so as to create a casement window within the hinged door. It may be opened independently of the door itself. A screen panel covers the casement. These doors have no trim, their surfaces are flush with the wall. They are of wood and are painted brown. Single doors flank the main entry door on the west front. Three sets of double doors are found on the south facing both south and west (one set of doors has the same measurements but does not have glazed panels). Two single doors are also found on the north elevation in the second and fifth arches from the west.

There is a door on each wing. The door on the north wing is located on the west elevation, and is a glazed panel door of two over five lights, painted brown. The door on the south wing, located on the west elevation is a glazed panel door with three over six lights, painted brown.

On the east elevation there is a garage door of the overhead variety, painted brown. There are four other doors on this side, one is arched; there are two glazed panel doors of two over five lights, and one glazed panel door of three over two lights.

c. Windows and shutters: Windows occur on the north, south and east elevations as well as the elevated portion of the main block. On the wings, windows can be found on the west elevation of the south wing and along the east elevation of both wings.

There are six arched openings along the north elevation. Wood and glass panel infills are used in the second through sixth openings from the west (the first arch has a stuccoed frame infill). The second and fifth arches contain combinations of windows and

doors, while the third, fourth, and sixth arches only contain windows. The composition of the arches are as follows: in the second arch from the west there is a door of four lights in three tiers, flanked by a casement panel to the left and a fixed panel to the right. Each panel has three lights in two tiers. A hopper light is placed over the door and the remainder of the arched opening is filled with framed glass panels. In the third, fourth, and sixth arches from the west, there are casement windows of four lights in two tiers, flanked by a casement of three lights in two tiers. Hopper lights and fixed panels fill out the remainder of the arches. The fifth arch is similar to the fourth and sixth except that the casement window is replaced by a door.

On the south elevation the fourth, fifth and sixth arches from the west have infill panels of wood and glass, and are similar to the compositions seen on the north side.

In the elevated portion of the building (over the assembly hall), there are seven hopper lights on the west side and eighteen hopper lights on the north and south sides. The glass panels have five lights in three tiers, and are of colored glass in yellow and green-yellow tones. The individual lights are not rectangular in form, although they conform to a general rectangle. The compositions contain painted vignettes of California scenery and one of a three-masted sailing ship.

On the west elevation of the south wing there are two groupings of four casement window panels on either side of the doorway. The windows are paired and have four lights in two tiers.

There are two pairs of casements on the east elevation. The panels are similar to those on the west elevation of the south wing. There are similar single casement panels on the north end, and about mid-point along the wall.

9. Roof:

a. Shape and covering: The building is essentially a one story building with a flat roof. The roof has a

slight slope and is covered with rolled asphalt. Parapets of about 10" surround the entire building. The roof color is grey. There are three different levels of roof, the highest over the main block, the lowest over the side wings, and the intermediate level over the garage, formerly an open court.

On the main block there is an elevated portion of the roof over the assembly hall. It has a hip roof 50' x 60' at the eaves, with an 11' ridge running east to west. The ridge of the elevated portion rises about 13' above the lower roof level. The original wood shingle roof surface is covered with a green asphalt shingle roof. The shingles were laid on wooden sheathing. The ridges are covered with red clay tiles with small caps at the terminations of the ridge. The center 26' of the east slope continues in shed fashion to the east wall. The roof slope is one to four.

There are seven skylights on the flat portion of the roof and one skylight on the east shed of the hip roof.

b. Cornice and eaves: There are 2" x 3" downspouts with collector boxes. Water leaves the roof through holes in the parapet and enters the boxes. Downspouts are located at either end of the west elevation, at either end of the main block on the east elevation, and on the north and south wings.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The first impression of the floor plan is that it is symmetrically arranged around an east to west axis, and contained within a simple rectangle. On closer examination, however, it is apparent that Gill took liberties in the layout of the rooms.

The plan radiates from the assembly hall, which is on axis and lies toward the east (rear) of the building. To either side are spaces that can be enclosed by rolling doors or used as an expansion space for the assembly hall. These rooms are identical in width, but the northern (lunch room), is larger than the southern (a club room). At the eastern end of the assembly hall is a stage that projects slightly into the room. The floor of the stage is about two feet above that of the assembly hall.

Along the east end of the building, stretching across the two wings, are several small rooms having ancillary functions. Starting at the north end is a storage room, a garage, the kitchen, a small chamber, the back stage, and a series of rooms belonging to the caretaker (bathroom, kitchen, living room and bedroom).

The entry vestibule is at the west end of the building and is flanked by two committee rooms and two small toilet rooms. In the northwest corner of the porch is a small frame and stucco storage room.

2. Stairways: There are several short run stairs, primarily around the stage including: four moveable wooden risers, on axis; four wooden risers on either side of the stage (the right set are new stairs and cover the old stairway to the stage and former dressing room); two stairs of three risers to rooms at either side of the backstage (the right set has been covered with new stairs); two stairs of one riser from the rooms at either side of the back stage up to the stage; three risers from the rooms to the side of the back stage to the side wings on the north and south.

3. Flooring: All flooring is of poured concrete, painted red except for the assembly hall (2-1/2" wooden floor boards) and in the kitchen (rolled vinyl flooring).

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Originally all ceilings were plaster on wooden lath. In the assembly hall and the two major rooms to either side, a ceiling of textured square acoustical tile has been applied. The remaining ceilings retain their painted plaster surfaces.

   Walls are of plaster and painted in various light colors.

5. Doorways and doors: The doorways are extremely plain with no border molding on jamb and head. Doors are either single panel doors or they have glass panels with two lights in five tiers. All doors are of wood except for one door to the caretaker's apartment from the stage (steel).

6. Special decorative features, trim, and cabinet work: This building is typical of Gill's mature works, having very little in the way of decorative features. There is

a cornice molding in the assembly hall and the two flanking spaces. That of the assembly hall is 10-1/2" high and projects 4-1/2" from the wall. At the bottom is a quarter round molding, then a 5" flat board, followed by a syma recta. In the other rooms the molding is 6" high and contains the same sections but with a 3" flat board.

At the east end of the south (club) room there is a series of built-in cabinets with glass paneled doors. The cabinet work is plain with simple board framing. In the southwest committee room there is a built-in cabinet of the same characteristics.

7. Hardware: There is no unusual hardware in the building. Simple butt hinges and plain round grips are used. All hardware is of brass.

8. Mechanical equipment: Wood burning fireplaces are located in the east walls of the two committee rooms. An air handling unit is placed in the attic space over the assembly hall. Air units are also located on the roof of the two flanking spaces. Electrical lighting is used.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: The La Jolla Woman's Club is situated on the southeast corner of the intersection of Silverado and Draper Streets. At this intersection Prospect Street cuts diagonally across from the southwest to the northeast. The building is oriented toward the west with the front elevation facing onto Draper Street. There is an alley at the rear along the east property line. The site measures 150' (6 lots) by 140' (east to west).

2. Historic landscape design: To the west of the building itself, there is a front yard circa 44' x 150' enclosed by a concrete wall 2'8" high. On the north side (Silverado Street) this wall ties into another wall about 6' high which is located on the property line.

The grassed west yard is enclosed by low walls. A concrete walk links the entrance gate (on axis) with the main entrance. Concrete walks parallel the front of the building and connect it to the pergola entrances.

Originally the front yard contained several large trees, of which only two are remaining. The pergolas are covered with "cup of gold" vines. The planned gardens, enclosed by the pergolas and the building, have brick walks laid out within. The brick is laid in the herringbone fashion with running courses used as edging.

3. Surrounding structures: To the south, on the adjacent parcel of property is another Gill structure. This is the Kautz House (7753 Draper) designed and built in 1913, using the same tilt-up system of construction as employed in the Woman's Club.

   The La Jolla Community Center (600 Prospect Street) lies across Draper Street from the Woman's Club. It was designed and built by Gill in 1914. On the west side of Prospect is the Ellen Scripps House, which Gill designed in 1916. The building has been completely remodeled for the La Jolla Art Center and is not recognizable as the residence. Further south on Prospect Street is the Bishop's School for Girls, designed by Gill in 1916, and having several additions.

Prepared by Robert C. Giebner
Project Supervisor
Historic American
Buildings Survey
June 1971

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the San Diego Historical Society, the San Diego Historic Sites Board, the County of San Diego, and the American Institute of Architects. The recording project was completed under the direction of James C. Massey, chief of HABS. The La Jolla Woman's Club was measured and drawn in the summer of 1971 by Professor Robert C. Giebner (University of Arizona), project supervisor, with student architects Jashina A. Tarr (University of California at Berkeley), Ronald J. Lake (Ball State University) and Phillip P. Wisley (Ball State University), at the San Diego California Field Office. The drawings were edited by William Klein in the HABS office. The historical written data was prepared by Alberta E. Outcalt in June 1971; the architectural written data was

prepared by Robert C. Giebner, project supervisor in August 1971. The data was edited and in some cases expanded in January 1979 by Mary Beth Betts of the HABS office. Photographs were taken in August 1971 by Marvin Rand for HABS.